



Environmental CAREERS

A Challenging and Rewarding Job

Working in the water and wastewater industry can be extremely rewarding since you are providing an important service to your community. It just might be one of the most important positions in the world since no one can live without water. It takes knowledgeable, conscientious people to deliver clean, potable water and to ensure that wastewater is discharged in an environmentally safe manner.

It takes special people to do this job. People who like to work with their hands and have an interest in biology, chemistry and mathematics are well-suited for the job. One thing is for sure—no two days are the same for water or wastewater operators. They may be repairing a leak in a water line, running a backhoe, adjusting chemical feed rates and fixing a pump one day and the next day working in the laboratory testing samples for pathogens and microorganisms or presenting information to the town board or the public. Operators wear many hats.

A college degree is of value but is not required. This career does require a great deal of training and experience. If you like a challenge and the responsibility of protecting the public and the environment—this could be the job for you!

For More Information:

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176
800-361-4827
www.dnr.mo.gov

Division of Environmental Quality
Operation Certification Section
www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wpp/opcert/oprtrain.htm

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Safe Drinking Water Hotline
800-426-4791
www.epa.gov/safewater/operatorcertification

While many other occupations are projected to experience a decrease in employment, the water and wastewater industry is projected to grow 18.7 percent over the next 10 years.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor,
Career Guide to Industries, 2008-09 Edition, Utilities

Water and Wastewater Operators



*Work with your hands,
your head and your heart.*



Missouri Department
of Natural Resources



Requirements

Water and wastewater operators serve their neighbors by protecting public health. It is extremely important that people receive clean, potable water and that wastewater be discharged in an environmentally safe manner.

Water and wastewater operators are certified by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

There are minimum educational and experience requirements depending on the various certification levels.

For Drinking Water Treatment and Distribution Operator Certifications:

- Pass a state certification exam.
- Possess the required amount of operating experience, which ranges from six months to 5 ½ years depending on the certificate level. Equivalent experience, like a department-approved multi-day course, can count towards experience requirements.
- An additional six months of operating experience or completion of a special department-approved training course is needed for those who do not have a high school diploma or GED.

For Wastewater Operator Certification:

- Pass a state certification exam.
- Possess the required amount of operating experience, which ranges from one year to six years depending on the certificate level. Equivalent experience, like a department-approved multi-day course, high school diploma or GED count towards experience requirements.

Preparation

It is especially helpful to have some science and math knowledge with some mechanical ability. It is recommended that students take preparation courses in basic biology, chemistry and mathematics, as well as some shop courses like carpentry, metal working, plumbing, heavy equipment or automotive studies.

The Rewards

Depending on the size of the utility, salaries can begin in the mid-\$20,000s and may reach more than \$100,000 at the upper level. Many municipal systems offer health care and retirement plans.

One of the greatest rewards for water and wastewater operators is knowing they are protecting public health and the environment and providing a much needed and valuable service to their community.

Operator Certification

There are a number of colleges and training providers that offer department-approved courses for operator certification. A list of upcoming water and wastewater certification courses can be found by visiting the department's Web site at www.dnr.mo.gov/env/wpp/opcert/oprtrain.htm.

Experience

Try visiting your local water or wastewater department. You might be able to gain some experience through a summer job or internship. It would give you the chance to see if this is the career for you.

Opportunities

It is expected that within the next 10 years, qualified operators will be in short supply nationwide. This may result in more opportunities in the job market for advancement, flexible work schedules, location, variety of utility size and technologies, technical training and negotiable wages and benefits.

“Almost half of the utilities workforce will be nearing retirement age within the next 10 years, resulting in excellent opportunities for qualified entrants.”

It takes 2 gallons to brush your teeth, 2 to 7 gallons to flush a toilet, and 25 to 50 gallons to take a shower.

